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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a teacher recruitment project that involved a 90-minute reception on a high school campus designed to help students learn more about what it is like to be a family and consumer sciences (FCS) educator. Planning the reception involved obtaining funding, inviting students, creating a multimedia presentation, selecting teachers to speak, and preparing the physical facility. The multimedia presentation included photographs of students actively engaged in FCS classrooms, which were organized to show a six-period teacher's day. The title was "Family and Consumer Sciences Education: Teaching Students to Build Better Homes and Stronger Families One Class at a Time." This was followed by the caption, "Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher. This Could be You!" Four FCS teachers spoke at the reception, addressing why it was satisfying to teach FCS and why the subject matter is needed in today's world. To determine the career plans of seniors who attended the reception, researchers collected data from teachers on about 150 students at the end of the school year. About two-fifths intended to major in related disciplines, FCS specialty areas, and related occupations; one-fifth planned to major in other areas; and one-eighth planned to major in FCS education. (SM)

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Family and Consumer Sciences Teachers:

The Best Resource for Recruiting New Teachers

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Abstract

A host of publications provide evidence for the teacher shortage (e.g., Jackman, 1996; Miller & Meszaros, 1996) and list suggestions that various groups of FCS educators can use to effectively recruit new professionals (e.g., Miller & Tulloch, 1999; Tulloch & Miller, 1999). Of these suggestions, the involvement of teachers is "perhaps the most critical component in attracting students into the profession" (Miller & Tulloch, 1999, p. 2). The purpose of this article, therefore, is to vividly describe a teacher recruitment project in which secondary teachers played a vital role. Recommendations for future efforts are included.

Family and Consumer Sciences Teachers:

The Best Resource for Recruiting New Teachers

We are the rapping teachers from BYU
Family-n-Consumer Science is what we do!
Across the nation it's an organization
It used to be called Home Ec-onomics Education.

You'll say to yourself is this really for me?
Listen to these words very carefully!
The first thing is that you should know
It's not just cooking or learning how to sew.

You learn a lot things about the family
Getting along takes some responsibility!
You gonna grow up be a momma or a dad
Adult roles class you wish you would a had?

Child development is where you should be
learning all you can about the-- baby.
Physical, social, and intellectually
Everything in between A and Z!

The home's an important place to be
it's got to look nice don't you agree
Come on down don't be a whiner
You gonna be an Interior Designer!

If this isn't enticing you
hold on wait let me give you the news!
There's one other item - if you don't care
only one minute and I will share.

These skills will be with you for life
They might even help you find a husband or a wife!
Come on down and take a little peek
Become a FACS Teacher that's the way to be!

An intensely captivated audience of approximately 130 outstanding secondary students clapped to the beat as Jason Skidmore, a high school family and consumer sciences (FCS) teacher,

performed this original rap at an on-campus reception. The goal of the reception was to help students learn more about what it would be like to be an FCS educator. Like Jason, many educators from across Utah and a few others from Maryland helped to make the recruiting reception a reality.

A host of publications provide evidence for the teacher shortage[1] (e.g., Jackman, 1996; Miller & Meszaros, 1996) and list suggestions that various groups of FCS educators can use to effectively recruit new professionals (e.g., Miller & Tulloch, 1999; Tulloch & Miller, 1999). Our ideas for involving teachers in past and future recruiting efforts grew out of having read these publications. What is now needed in the literature are detailed accounts that describe how these suggestions have been used.

"Teachers are perhaps the most critical component in attracting students into the profession" (Miller & Tulloch, 1999, p. 2). The purpose of this article, therefore, is to describe the FCS Teacher Recruitment Project that was carried out at Brigham Young University in November of 2000. Our hope is that such vivid, concrete accounts will make it easier for teachers and other professionals to take action. Many more strategic, united efforts are needed to address the national crisis in the supply of family and consumer sciences educators (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, 1999).

Preparations for an On-Campus Reception

We spent much time and effort preparing to hold a reception that lasted approximately 90 minutes. Preliminary activities included (a) obtaining funding, (b) inviting students, (c) creating a multimedia presentation, (d) selecting teachers to speak, and (e) preparing the physical facility. We describe each of these activities in hopes that they can be used in or adapted for other

settings.

Obtaining funding. In July we contacted Renee Hyer, state specialist at the Utah State Office of Education, to see if grant monies were available for a teacher recruitment project. We submitted the project objectives and a budget to develop recruitment materials that would be used at the reception. Given that the multimedia presentation shown at the reception could eventually be shared with other professionals in the nation, and that three Utah universities would be represented at the reception, the project was awarded a small grant through the federal Carl Perkins Act. Note that the project was easily funded because it was a small grant, and the money went a long ways.

Inviting students. A telephone network was implemented midsummer. One or more high school teachers in various regions of the state contacted other teachers. The message sent through the network updated teachers about the shortage, informed them about the reception, and requested that they each submit the names, addresses and phone numbers of at least four outstanding seniors who would then receive an invitation to attend the reception. We used a telephone contact, not email, because we wanted immediate questions, answers and replies that could be highly personalized. Further, at an FCS conference sponsored by the Utah State Office of Education in August, a teacher educator briefly spoke at a general session about the teacher shortage and plans to hold a reception in a central location in the state. Teachers were again asked to submit information for at least four outstanding seniors by the end of September so that each could be mailed an invitation. A brightly colored index card with information about where to mail the student information was then distributed to each teacher.

One of the teachers who critically reviewed the project pointed out that junior high school

students should be included. Therefore, we decided to also encourage each junior high teacher to bring two ninth graders, or to send them with a parent. Information about the project was now sent to teachers in writing: (a) through the state office's email mailing list, (b) in the regular mailing from the state office, and (c) in a letter. Teachers responded by submitting the requested information. The names submitted numbered 331 students, of which 304 were seniors. Each student was mailed a formal invitation and a map with directions on how to reach the reception location. There were approximately 107 high schools in the state. The number participating was 45%.

Creating a multimedia presentation. When we first decided to create a multimedia presentation to show at the reception, we felt that it should capitalize on students' background knowledge from having been students in FCS classrooms. One of the teachers on the committee telephoned selected teachers across the state and requested photos of students actively engaged in FCS classrooms. Teachers were specifically asked for photos in which it was immediately apparent (to an observer) that the students were participating in an FCS-related learning activity. Some teachers sent photos in the mail, and two of the central committee also drove to various teachers' homes to get their photos. Approximately 800 photographs were submitted.

A small committee comprised of (a) two high school teachers, (b) a junior high school teacher, and (c) a teacher educator then met to decide how to use the pictures in the presentation. The main goal of the presentation was to depict what it is like to be a teacher in junior high and high school classrooms. We decided to organize the pictures to show a six-period teacher's day. Each of the first four class periods spotlighted a different FCS subject matter area, i.e., foods and nutrition, family relationships and human development, apparel and textiles, housing and interior

design. The fifth period depicted what teachers do during their preparation period. The last period of the day showcased Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA).

A content analysis process helped to select and organize the pictures. This process began by brainstorming many of the topics commonly taught on the secondary level for each subject matter area, the tasks that teachers engage in during their preparation period, and the kinds of activities students participate in as members of FCCLA. For each class period, we then selected a letter of the alphabet and tried to match the topics with that letter. For example, the letter "C" was selected for second period -- family relationships and human development. A few of the "C" topics generated for this class period included confidence (self-esteem), choices (decision making), coping (stress management), common "cents" (money management), and communication. We had in mind that as each topic was flashed on the screen, that corresponding photos would then appear. In organizing the photos according to subject matter area, we noticed that some topics lacked corresponding photos. For these topics, we brainstormed various scenes that could be staged, and we photographed them. Finally, we decided on short captions that would appear on the screen throughout the presentation.

The title selected for the presentation was "Family and Consumer Sciences Education: Teaching Students to Build Better Homes and Stronger Families One Class at a Time." The title was followed with a blank picture frame and the caption, "Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher. This Could Be You!" To introduce the six-period day, the next caption read, "A Day in the Life of a Family and Consumer Sciences Student." Pictures of family and consumer sciences teachers accompany the last caption, "Family and Consumer Sciences Teachers: Inspiring Students, One Class at a Time. To provide the background music for the presentation, each

committee member submitted music thought to appeal to secondary students.

At this point, the teacher educator on the committee appointed another committee to critically review the multimedia presentation and reception agenda. The review committee consisted of (a) a teacher educator, (b) a junior high school teacher, and (c) a high school teacher. A few of the suggestions that came from the review included obtaining many more pictures of students who were members of minority ethnic and/or racial groups, staging specific pictures for various topics, and placing on display enlarged pictures of college students enrolled in FCS courses.

The committee made another suggestion that we not use any of the music that had been submitted. Instead, they suggested that we obtain permission from Disney to use music from various films to help create vivid images of each period, e.g., "When You Wish Upon a Star" for the beginning and ending, "We're Family" for family relationships and human development, "The Spectrum Song" for housing and interior design, "Be Our Guest" for foods and nutrition, "The Work Song" for apparel and textiles, "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo" for the teacher's preparation period, "Go the Distance" for FCCLA.

To increase the diversity depicted in the presentation, we contacted a professor from Maryland. We told her about the project and the need for additional photos. Rather than requesting that Maryland teachers submit photos to her, she staged various photos at schools with relatively diverse student populations. Finally, we enlisted the help of a teacher, known for her skill in creating presentations, and she put the presentation together on Microsoft PowerPoint.

Selecting teachers to speak. We asked four teachers to speak at the reception. Two of them were seasoned teachers who had taught for at least 20 years. The other two had entered

teaching within the last 2 to 4 years. Three of the teachers were female, and the one newest to the profession was male. We asked all of them to address two questions that included: (1) Why is it satisfying to teach family and consumer sciences? and (2) Why is the subject matter needed in today's world? To capitalize on the teachers' unique strengths, we also asked each of them to address one or more specific ideas. Some of these were the advantages of selecting teaching as a career, FCS education as preparation for a career and participation in a family, and males electing to major in FCS education. We intended that the teachers' videotaped presentations would be integrated into the multimedia presentation at a later date.

Preparing the physical facility. The recruiting reception was held in two rooms and a hallway. Refreshments were first served in a large room. Students then moved to an auditorium next door. At the conclusion of the reception, faculty from the three teacher licensing institutions in our state, Brigham Young University, Utah State University, and Southern Utah University talked informally with students and parents outside these rooms in a large hallway.

A month before the reception, faculty members from each university submitted pictures of their students in various college courses. The four subject matter areas were represented, and, once again, we specifically focused on using photos where it was immediately apparent what students were doing. The pictures not taken with a digital camera were scanned onto a disk. Forty-two of the best pictures were enlarged to13X22 using a computer program called Adobe Photo Shop 6.0, and the pictures were printed using a plotter. We then mounted each of them on various colors of posterboard. The pictures were placed on standing easels along the walls of the room where refreshments were served, and they were also mounted on a wall of windows in the hallway outside the two rooms.

Table cloths, utensils, and refreshments were ordered through the campus catering service. Four faculty members created centerpieces using objects from their homes and the department. Various other faculty members served refreshments. The presentation in the auditorium required a computer, a projection unit, sound equipment, a screen or projection wall, and microphones. We also enlisted various individuals to control the lighting and to film each of the speakers. Further, tables with centerpieces were set up in the hallway with program literature from each university.

The Reception

Several university faculty formed a receiving line and greeted secondary students and their parents as they arrived. Students then enjoyed refreshments and perused the mounted pictures of college students in FCS courses. About 25 minutes into the reception, students were formally welcomed to the reception and asked to move to the auditorium next door.

When students were all seated, Renee Hyer, our State Office of Education Supervisor for Family and Consumer Sciences, gave a brief greeting. Dr. Maxine Rowley, a teacher educator, then talked about why students had been invited to the reception, and she introduced a high school student who would help her share one of the traditions in the profession. The two of them lit a Betty Lamp, and Dr. Rowley explained the history and symbolism of the lamp, and told a story of its use in Colonial America. Dr. Rowley focused her remarks on teaching, and concluded by introducing Chris Moore, an FCS teacher of 27 years. All of this took about 7 minutes.

Chris's presentation most emphasized how she came to be a professional home economist (FCS teacher), how her curriculum had changed over the years, and how she has seen family and consumer sciences transform her students' lives. Chris encouraged students to consider choosing

FCS education as a major, and then introduced the multimedia presentation.

In the middle of the multimedia presentation, the word, "School Assembly" flashed on the screen. At this point, Diana Hendricksen, also a veteran teacher, had two football players from her outdoor clothing class act out the lyrics of a song by Jonny Seww (2000) entitled, "Made to Measure." Diana then addressed the audience wearing many completed samples of the projects that her students make, e.g., a fleece jacket and hat, boxer shorts, pajamas, socks. She emphasized how much fun she has had changing her curriculum based on new research and fashion trends. Diana also mentioned that teaching is enjoyable because the students in her classes are highly motivated to participate in learning activities that apply to everyday life. Further, she focused on the impact that FCS has had on her students' lives.

Following Diana's remarks, the multimedia presentation continued. When it concluded, Jason Skidmore, a teacher from one of Utah's largest high schools, spoke. Like Chris and Diana, he too emphasized how FCS teachers have the opportunity to change what they do over time so that they can make a difference in a changing world. He specifically talked about family structure and how he can make a difference by teaching skills in family relationships that prevent child abuse and divorce now and in the future. Jason further emphasized that teaching FCS is not just for females. To convey his thinking about the profession, he then performed his rap.

Marci Morgan, the concluding speaker, acknowledged the students in the audience as being outstanding, and pointed out that the teachers in attendance were once making the same career decisions. She indicated that her decision had been a good one because it enabled her to be a successful family member and to have a career that changes the lives of others. She recalled having studied several subject areas in college rather than just one, and that other people have

often relied on her for the valuable knowledge that she gained. Finally, to help her emphasize the mission of the profession, Marci quoted various parts of the FCCLA Creed. Students were then invited to move out into the hall and meet with representatives from each of the universities.

Results

To determine the career plans of the 304 seniors who were invited to the reception, we again contacted teachers near the end of the year in May, 2001. We mentioned that we were writing this article, and that we needed to know what these students had decided to do upon graduation from high school, i.e., if they planned to go to college, the university they would attend, the major they had selected.

Teachers submitted information for 50% of the seniors. Teachers' comments suggest that the time of year, their being heavily involved in closing out the school year, affected the response rate. Several patterns, nevertheless, are clear. Nine students had no plans to attend college. Of those who plan to attend college, two-fifths of students' responses indicate that they intend to major in related disciplines (frequency=28), FCS specialty areas (f=22), and related occupations (f=6). One-fourth of the students were undecided as to their major (f=38). One-fifth of the students planned to major in other areas or disciplines (f=31). Further, one-eighth of the students planned to major in FCS education (f=18). Table 1 displays frequency counts for specific responses.

These results suggest that teachers focus most of their time on FCS specialty areas or related disciplines such as elementary education as they integrate career education into the curriculum. Most of the students enrolled in child care courses, for example, planned to major in elementary education or child and family development/early childhood education. A comment

from a teacher of fashion merchandising and housing and interior design provides evidence of her emphasis on FCS specialty areas. She stated, "I think that the majority of my students are more interested in interior design or fashion. . . . We visited a business college recently and looked at the design portfolios. They seemed very interested in their program." The teacher did not mention having explored a teaching career in FCS with her students. The need to specifically focus on teaching FCS is also apparent given the large number of students who were undecided as to their major, or who had decided to major in other areas or disciplines.

Conclusion

Teachers were a critical component in our recruiting efforts. While the reception and program focused on teacher experiences with FCS programs and the differences that it had made in the lives of their students, greater emphasis could have been placed on the shortage of FCS teacher educators, while also stressing the personal and professional rewards of the profession and how it would affect people's lives if FCS curriculum ceased to exist. It is clear that the teacher shortage is not unique to Utah, however, successes in this initial effort can help other FCS units increase enrollment and preparation of future FCS teacher educators.

Several suggestions will help to either simplify or improve similar, future efforts. First, the reception would have been much easier to prepare for had we not invested so much time preparing the multimedia presentation. Nevertheless, others will be able to use it to recruit majors when it has undergone several more reviews and revisions. Much time was also spent creating the large, mounted photographs of college students. In retrospect, we should have held the reception in the building on campus that houses FCS education because the halls have many display cases and bulletin boards that focus on the major. Further, teachers and parents need to

be enlisted to bring students to a reception. We sensed from conversations with teachers that some students were hesitant to attend the reception alone. Finally, we suggest that future receptions also include various portions of the program that are affective. The Betty Lamp ceremony, the students acting out the song lyrics, and the rap helped to hook students emotionally.

Results from the followup survey provide additional insights concerning future recruitment efforts. For more than a decade, one of the authors, a longtime teacher educator, has been aware of an impending teacher shortage. She sensed, early on, that a factor fueling the shortage was students' difficulty in finding FCS education on college campuses because of the vast number of department names in use. Then in the early 1990's, she identified an added deterrent during a conversation with one of the coauthors who, at that time, was a high school teacher.

The teacher proudly declared that she had helped a number of her housing and interior design students to apply for college scholarships in interior design. The teacher educator inquired about the number of students who were planning to major in FCS education. The answer was, "None." In this instance, the teacher had not emphasized the possibility of obtaining a degree in the generalist major, but had only promoted the specialty area that she taught and most enjoyed. Prior to carrying out the FCS Teacher Recruitment Project, we sensed that this scenario is a common phenomenon. Findings from the followup survey suggest that this is the case. The distribution and use of lesson plans such as the one included in the monograph by Miller and Tulloch (1999) could help teachers to educate students about the career option of teaching FCS.

Not only should teachers help their students understand what teaching FCS is like, they also need to help students make connections between individual courses and the discipline. When

we go into secondary schools and ask students where we can find the family and consumer sciences department, they do not know. If, in contrast, we ask students to direct us to child development, they do so without hesitation. Students do not associate individual FCS courses with the discipline.

In conclusion, we encourage others to engage in FCS teacher recruitment projects, and publish vivid, concrete accounts of their efforts. With many more such accounts, we can encourage others to take action, begin to identify the benefits and costs of various strategies, and determine their effectiveness.

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Author Note

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Footnotes

[1]Congruent with other programs nationwide, the number of FCS education graduates in Utah has declined sharply over the past three decades. Brigham Young University (BYU) has one of the largest FCS education programs nationally. The enrollment, however, is one-seventh its size prior to the feminist movement's peak in the 1980's. BYU used to supply a large number of the teachers for the intermountain area. Now the university is barely supplying enough teachers for Utah. Efforts to recruit majors have focused on taking action before an acute shortage occurs. Other universities in Utah have teamed with us to recruit majors in spite of studies reporting that Utah is not experiencing a teacher shortage (e.g., American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, 1999; Miller & Tulloch, 1999).

Table 1

High School Senior's Career Plans

Responses	Frequency	Total Frequency
Related Disciplines		28
1. Elementary education	18	
2. Special education	3	
3. Psychology	3	
4. Social work	2	
5. Art	1	
6. History	1	
FCS Specialty Areas		22
1. Child and family development/ early childhood education	12	
2. Housing and interior design	7	
3. Apparel and textiles	2	
4. Food science and nutrition	1	
Related Occupations		6
1. Cosmetology	5	
2. Culinary arts	1	
Undecided About a Major		38
Other Areas or Disciplines		31
1. Music	4	

Table 1 Continued

Responses	Frequency	Total Frequency
2. Business	4	
3. Nursing	4	
4. Communications	2	
5. Physical education	2	
6. Physical therapy	2	
7. Accounting	1	
8. Biomedical engineer	1	
9. Broadcast journalism	1	
10. Computer science	1	
11. Dance	1	
12. Dental assisting	1	
13. English	1	
14. Humanities	1	
15. Mechanic	1	
16. Meteorology	1	
17. Neonatology	1	
18. Photography	1	
19. Pre-med	1	
FCS Education		18

Note. Teachers submitted information for 152 seniors. This table reports the frequency of various responses for the 143 students who planned to attend college.